DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 413 846 HE 030 758

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TITLE	The New Transfer Student Network: Retention and Quality through Student-Faculty Interaction.
INSTITUTION	State Univ. of New York, Plattsburgh.
SPONS AGENCY	Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1991-12-31
NOTE	16p.
CONTRACT	P116B80112-90
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Persistence; Bachelors Degrees; College Students; Cooperative Programs; Higher Education; Institutes (Training Programs); Intervention; *Models; Public Colleges; *School Holding Power; Summer Programs; *Transfer Students; Two Year Colleges; Undergraduate Study
IDENTIFIERS	State University of New York Coll at Plattsburgh

ABSTRACT

This final report describes activities and accomplishments of a 40-month federally supported program at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Plattsburgh to create models for increasing the persistence rate to the baccalaureate of students who transfer from two-year colleges to four-year schools. These models were created by a transfer network of student, staff, and faculty representatives from four- and two-year SUNY and City University of New York (CUNY) colleges and from SUNY Central administration. The models include joint projects between two- and four-year institutions and individual projects by institutions. Three annual Transfer Summer Institutes were held at SUNY/Plattsburgh. Chief participants included the four-year SUNY/Plattsburgh and 10 two-year public colleges in New York. The rate of retention of transfer students improved from 81.1 percent to 86.4 percent during the years of the project. The project also produced a number of products, including: a video and transfer guides for students, questionnaires, syllabi, mentoring guides, and seminar guides. Plans for continuing a variation of the project are underway. Individual sections of the report present an overview of the project and describe the project's purpose, background and origins; overall organization and activities; and results. (DB)

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Buckley, Suzann
SUNY Plattsburgh

THE NEW TRANSFER STUDENT NETWORK: RETENTION AND QUALITY THROUGH STUDENT-FACULTY INTERACTION.

COVER SHEET

ED 413 846

GRANTEE ORGANIZATION:

Research Foundation of SUNY Plattsburgh
P.O. Box 9
Albany, NY 12201

GRANT NUMBER:

P116B80112-90

PROJECT DATES:

Starting Date: September 1, 1988

Ending Date: December 31, 1991

Number of months: 40

PROJECT DIRECTORS:

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HE 030 758

F.I.P.S.E. PROGRAM OFFICER: John Donahue

GRANT AWARD:

1988-89 Year 1	$90,733
1989-90 Year 2	$83,251
1990-91 Year 3	$87,380
Total	$261,364

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B. Summaries

ERIC Summary

The Transfer Project (funded by F.I.P.S.E. from 9/87-12/91) created models for increasing the persistence rate to the baccalaureate of students who transfer from two-year colleges to four-year schools. These models were created by a Transfer Network of student, staff and faculty representatives from four- and two-year State University of New York (SUNY) and City University of New York (CUNY) colleges and from SUNY Central administration. The models include joint projects between two- and four-year institutions and individual projects by institutions. Most of the ideas for the projects were developed at three annual Transfer Summer Institutes held at the four-year college responsible for the project--SUNY Plattsburgh. The chief participants in the project were the four-year school of SUNY Plattsburgh and ten two-year public colleges in New York State. The rate of retention of transfer students improved significantly during the years of the grant. In 1987/88 the rate was 81.1%; in 1991/92 it was 86.4% Much of the work of the Project continues at each of the participating campuses, and at SUNY Central one of the original members of the Project at SUNY Plattsburgh continue to work with SUNY Central to explore the possibilities of other SUNY institutions developing regional networks modelled upon those created by the Project.

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As a result of the Project a variety of models for retention were produced. They are available from SUNY Plattsburgh and include: 1. A video, "Moving Out, Moving On," for students about how best to prepare for transfer; 2. Transfer Guides to help students who wish to transfer to Plattsburgh plan their academic programs at their two-year schools by stating, among other things, what specific courses at their school match those at Plattsburgh; 3. A questionnaire for survey of faculty attitudes towards transfer students; 4. A syllabus for a Transfer seminar at a two-year school; 5. Syllabi for Library Skills courses at a four-year school which are specifically designed for transfer students; 6. A newsletter series for students transferring to Plattsburgh; 7. A constitution for a Transfer Club; 8. A program for an automated credit evaluation that is linked with graduation check for the four-year school; 9. Transfer Directories which give the name, major and previous school of a transfer student and are given to new transfer students and to transfer counsellors at the two-year school; 10. A program for developing a statistical analysis of high-risk courses for first semester transfer students; 11. An example of a transfer student mentor network; 12. A report of a writing diagnostic project conducted by faculty at receiving and sending colleges; 13. Guidelines for a student-to-student mentor network; 14. A script and planning document for Orientation seminars for transfer students; 15. A report on Media Programs at SUNY two-year institutions; and 16. The final report of the project, "The New Transfer Student Network: Retention and Quality Through Student-Faculty Interaction."

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SUNY Plattsburgh

Executive Summary
The New Transfer Student Network: Retention and Quality Through Student-Faculty Interaction

Research Foundation of SUNY/Plattsburgh
P.O. Box 9
Albany, NY 12201

Suzann Buckley, Project Director, 518-564-3150; 508-999-8268

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The project began in Fall 1988 with the creation of a network of representatives from the State University of New York (SUNY/Plattsburgh) and ten two-year institutions in New York State. Transfer networks of faculty, staff, and students were also created at SUNY Plattsburgh and at each of the participating schools. These networks were to identify problems affecting the success of transfer students in persisting towards a baccalaureate and to develop models for increasing their persistence rate.

During the three and one-half years of the grant, many diverse problems were identified and over a dozen joint and individual models were developed. Directly served were the approximately 1,500 students who transferred to Plattsburgh from one of the schools in the two-year network. The approximately 800 additional students who transferred to Plattsburgh during those years also benefited the 240 faculty and staff who attended the three annual Transfer Summer Institutes hosted by the Transfer Network benefited from faculty/staff development. Indirectly, the approximately 60,000 students who transferred into or within SUNY also benefited from the initiatives put in place.

The outcome was an improvement in the retention rate for transfer students (from 81.1% in 1988/89 to 86.4% in 1991/92), the establishment of procedures and programs that will continue to support transfer students, and the production of materials available for use by other schools.

PURPOSE

The problem we addressed was how to improve the retention rate of students who transfer from SUNY two-year colleges to SUNY four-year colleges. In 1988 almost 19,000 students transferred into or within SUNY. Nearly 13,500 enrolled at baccalaureate campuses with about one-half of those originating at SUNY two-year colleges. Depending upon the four-year campus, the retention rate for these students ranged from percentages in the 50s to the low 80s. We decided to address the issue from two directions: 1. Develop data from the SUNY Central system and our own schools to help us understand enrollment patterns for transfer students; and 2. Have faculty, staff, and students from two and four-year schools work in collaboration to identify problems affecting successful transfer and develop solutions.

Our understanding of the problem has changed in three major ways. At the outset, we assumed that retention was a general academic issue--students needed to come to a four-year school with better academic preparation and the four-year school needed to provide more academic support services for transfer students. We also assumed that the issue of transfer retention could be addressed primarily on a state level. Both assumptions are valid, but the issues are more complex than originally envisioned. With respect to general academics, we now recognize that students from certain schools in certain subjects are more vulnerable than others, and that certain of our courses are high risk the first semester. Concerning the statewide focus, we learned that in addition to central data collection and an expanded Transfer Counsellor organization, we need regional groupings of two- and four-year schools to address specific issues and facilitate continuing dialogue. In addition, we learned that social issues and total academic experience play a much larger role in the retention of transfer students than we had anticipated. .

For anyone trying to replicate our project some administrative pitfalls to be avoided are starting the project with too small a group, not providing at least one project director with the flexibility to travel extensively to the network colleges, and not clearly defining the responsibilities of co-directors.

BACKGROUND AND ORIGINS

SUNY Plattsburgh is one of sixty-four units within the State University of New York. Basically a four-year college, SUNY Plattsburgh enrolls 5200 undergraduates and over 700 graduate students in 50 majors and program study. It has long been a major receiver of transfer students (approximately 700+ enroll each year and 50% of the graduates each year start as transfer students). Two years before receiving the grant it had sponsored a statewide conference on transfer and articulation. It also had a fairly good record of retention of transfer students with a retention rate which had risen in the late 1980s from a rate of 74.6% in 1984-1986 to

78.6% in 1986-1987 and 81.1% in 1988-1989. Furthermore, transfer issues were a main responsibility and priority of a relatively new senior administrator at Plattsburgh, and transfer issues were a priority of the new Chancellor of the SUNY system.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Representatives from the two-year schools, SUNY Central, and SUNY Plattsburgh who comprised the Transfer Advisory Board, met three times during each academic year and once each year at an annual three-day Transfer Summer Institute. Each representative was encouraged to form a transfer network of faculty and staff at his or her campus. Our planning focused on our key assumptions that the identification of problems affecting retention of transfer students and the development of solutions rested on getting as much data as we could about the enrollment histories of transfer students, and on engaging in extensive and continuing dialogue with faculty, staff, and students at all the network schools and with representatives from SUNY Central. Our planning also kept in mind that concern for transfer issues would need to be continued at all levels--SUNY Central, SUNY Plattsburgh, and the two-year schools--long after funding from F.I.P.S.E. ceased.

The Plattsburgh network identified and addressed several transfer retention issues on the four-year campus including some faculty's negative perception of transfer students; inadequate academic preparation by some transfers; inadequate orientation for transfer students; inadequate social support structures for transfer students; and the need for an automated credit evaluation system and course equivalency guides as well as for recognition of academically outstanding transfer students. The SUNY/CUNY network identified and addressed several issues on their own campuses and on the SUNY Central administration level. These included: the need for more comprehensive data from SUNY Central about how their transfer students achieve at the four-year SUNY schools; the need for opportunities for two- and four-year college faculty and staff to meet to discuss issues of common concern; and additional ways to prepare students for transfer and to retain them at the four-year school.

Because it involved so many schools and Central Administration and because it had so many different components, the Project required a great deal of co-ordination. Fortunately, the grant provided funding to hire one person full-time as the Project coordinator and for a part-time secretary. Add to that the fact that one of the co-directors was released one course to work on the Project and that people were hired to do discrete tasks, and you have a sense of the labor intensive nature of the Project.

PROJECT RESULTS

Almost all of the issues raised through the Plattsburgh network were addressed. Our learners were faculty, staff, and students, and each product, Institute, and student-related activity has been evaluated. No report about any of the activities has been negative, but we did receive some very helpful suggestions for modifications. The overall result of all of our specific efforts is a more informed transfer student--one who knows to ask questions and is confident that s/he can persist--and a more aware and supportive faculty and staff at participating schools. The result of all of this can be seen in the improved retention rate from 81.1% in 1988/89 to 86.4% in 1991/1992.

A survey of faculty revealed a very positive attitude about transfer students among many faculty. This information was widely publicized which helped to challenge the views of the minority of the faculty with negative attitudes about transfer students' abilities. Awarding of 8-10 Presidential Transfer Scholarships (comparable to those awarded to outstanding entering Freshmen) and extensive publicity about the recipients helped remind faculty and staff about the academic strengths of some transfer students. A study of how students who had entered as Freshmen in Accounting and were now juniors compared with Transfer students in upper level accounting courses indicated no significant difference in the students' academic success. Orientation was added for the approximately 150 students entering in Spring semester, and both Fall and Spring orientations now have an academic component presented by faculty.

A comprehensive study of the transfer students who were academically dismissed indicated that in some cases the problem was less one of academic ability and more one of transfer students being placed in or selecting high risk courses or schedules the first semester. This problem was addressed by bringing it to the attention of faculty who pre-register students and by advising students during Orientation on how best to prepare a schedule. To help students be as prepared as possible for four-year academic work, the Associate Director of Admissions prepared Transfer Guides for the six main two-year schools sending Transfer students to Plattsburgh. He also automated the credit evaluation process, allowing the Admissions staff to provide credit evaluations for all students who apply. Since the credit evaluation is linked with a graduation audit check, the transfer student and his/her advisor will have an excellent academic map for the years the students is at Plattsburgh.

To give transfer students a sense of the work at Plattsburgh, the Transfer Center and Admissions Office host visits by students from local two-year schools. Some students are also able to have their writing skills evaluated before they come to Plattsburgh by one of Plattsburgh's writing faculty. To help students who may have come with inadequate academic background, the Project Director worked with faculty to encourage them to provide referrals to the staff of the Learning Center. If a transfer student fails out,

but successfully applies for reinstatement, a condition of reinstatement is that the student agree to attend a series of Learning-To-Learn workshops.

The issue of social support systems has been addressed in four ways: establishment of a club specifically for transfer students; annual publication of transfer student directories, a series of five newsletters addressing such points as advisement, study aboard, internships and course selection; and a student-to-student mentor network for education majors.

The SUNY and CUNY transfer network addressed its three main issues (data, maintaining the network, and additional ways to prepare students for transfer) from a variety of perspectives. The network worked closely with the Assistant Provost for Institutional Research and the Associate Vice Chancellor in the Office of Access Services. The former conducted a data needs and possibilities session at each of the three Summer Institutes; the latter also spoke to two of the Summer Institutes and has been instrumental in finding resources to continue aspects of the Project at SUNY Central. One outcome is an annual report which details the persistence of transfer students from a SUNY community college to a SUNY senior institution as part of the recently developed SUNY TRANSFER FEEDBACK SYSTEM.

Beginning in November 1992 SUNY Central began to investigate the possibility of organizing regional networks of two- and four-year schools. The former director of Enrollment Management at Plattsburgh, who had been closely associated with the Transfer Project, has been appointed to research this topic. At Plattsburgh the former Project Co-Director was given a very modest ($2,325) budget and office space for transfer activities. We continue to evaluate each of our activities, to modify existing ones, to develop new ones, and to monitor all of them as well as our retention rate.

SUMMARY and CONCLUSIONS

The goals of the grant have been met beyond our expectations in at least two ways: 1. The retention rate for transfer students is has gone from 81.1% to 86.4% and is hold holding steady in the mid-80s. We had hoped for a 3% increase. A 5.3% increase is remarkable, especially since during the years of the grant a new, very rigorous academic dismissal policy was introduced. 2. Despite the severe budget cuts experienced by SUNY, the Central Administration eventually was able to fund a person to investigate the possibility of establishing regional state transfer networks to adopt some of the Transfer Project's models or to create their own models of retention.

The insights I gained as a result of this activity were an understanding of the complexity and broadness of transfer issues, an awareness of how little attention had been paid to them, and an appreciation of what can be done with some effort. I also realized that researching transfer issues provide an opportunity to observe how well colleges and other institutions work--be it providing a definition of transfer, tracking retention rates, providing student services, or adopting policies for Admissions.

My advice to others is to involve as many people at as many different levels as soon and as long as possible and to work closely with their Institutional Research Office throughout the period of any grant. It is also very important to plan ahead who or what offices might assume some of the work done by the staff on F.I.P.S.E. money. Also, if the Project is to be co-directed it would be good to establish a clear division of labor at the outset and contingency plans if a co-director has to withdraw.

APPENDICES

The F.I.P.S.E. staff and Program Officer were very pleasant, supportive and helpful. They introduced me to people working on similar projects and answered all my questions in a timely and useful way. I suggest that they consider providing Project directors with recommendations on how they might publish the results of their projects, and that they continue to ask former Project directors to evaluate potential grants in their field.

Key considerations for future Transfer Projects continue to be how to improve retention. Continuing discussions between faculty and staff of two-and four-year schools in order to ensure adequate levels of preparation and reception will become increasingly challenging as budgets continue to be eroded. As the retention issue becomes more refined, emphasis will shift from simply retaining transfers (as well as Freshmen) to focussing on time needed for students to complete the baccalaureate, and on links to provide a progression from high school to a two-year school to a four-year school.

I am forwarding no materials generated during the time of the Project because they have been sent continuously during the Project. Since my Program Officer, Jay Donahue, said that his file on this Project was one of the thickest, I'm sure he'd be willing to forward all materials to you. If not, please let me know and I'll ship off a box load.

BODY OF REPORT

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Planning for the Project began in October 1987 after several issues about transfer were discussed at a conference organized by SUNY Plattsburgh's Associate Vice-President for Academic Affairs, the late Ingrun Lafleur. The Conference, funded in part by the Ford Foundation and attended by national and state experts on transfer issues, as well as by representatives from many of the SUNY two- and four-year schools, reviewed what had been done to remove barriers to successful transfer and identified some remaining obstacles.

Following that conference Dr. Lafleur called together a Plattsburgh campus planning team which included representatives from Admissions, Student Life and Academic Affairs. The planning group focussed upon the need to improve the retention rate of students at four-year receiving schools and to improve the preparation for transfer at the two-year schools. These ideas were discussed with representatives at select public two-year schools in New York. After these discussions the Plattsburgh planning group identified ten schools to invite to work with Plattsburgh in a Transfer Network whose goals would be to develop models of retention at a four-year school and models of preparation at two-year schools. The models would emphasize a variety of activities which stressed collaborative efforts between faculty, staff and students at the two- and four-year schools.

The schools were selected to include some of Plattsburgh's major sending schools, some schools with a large minority enrollment, and schools with a range of experience in developing programs for transfer as well as a range of institutional settings and missions. The schools selected for the Transfer Network were: one CUNY college, LaGuardia, two SUNY Technical colleges at Canton and Cobleskill (both major sending schools, one with a residential campus); seven SUNY Community Colleges--Adirondack, Clinton, Hudson Valley, Monroe, Nassau, North Country and Onondaga. Adirondack, Clinton, Hudson Valley and North Country are major sending schools and represent a variety of rural and urban environments throughout the state. Monroe, one the largest SUNY two-year schools, has a substantial minority enrollment. Onondaga and LaGuardia, as well as Cobleskill and Adirondack, had developed some specific programs for transfers.

Once the Project was funded by F.I.P.S.E. in 1988, the co-directors asked their President to invite the Presidents of each of the two-years schools to appoint a representative to join the Plattsburgh planning team and invited the Deputy to the Chancellor for Community Colleges from SUNY Central to form a Transfer Advisory Board. During the Fall of 1988 we met with our newly created Transfer Advisory Board to plan how to meet our objectives. We decided to hold a large institute in the summer to bring faculty, staff, and students representing the participating colleges together to develop specific proposals for the improved preparation and retention of transfer students. This was such a success that the institute was held in two subsequent years with several different representatives from the participating schools and, in the final year, with representatives from other two- and four-year SUNY schools.

During the three and one-half years of funding those most directly served were the approximately 1500 students who transferred to Plattsburgh from one of the two-year schools in the Transfer Network and the other 800 students who transferred to SUNY Plattsburgh since 1988 when the programs for improvement in retention began to be put into place. Students who benefited indirectly were all of the students at the participating two-year schools who planned to transfer to any four-year school (approximately 14,000). The 240 faculty and staff who participated on the Transfer Advisory Board or in the large annual summer institutes also benefited because the meeting and the institutes provided for faculty and staff development and the creation of an expanded Transfer Counsellor Association.

The tangible outcomes were the development of several models to improve transfer student preparation and retention and an increase in the retention rate among new transfers from 81.1% in 1987-88 to 86.4% in 1991-92, a rate which remains steady at about 86%. This outcome is especially noteworthy because of the introduction of a rigorous new dismissal policy which had its initial impact in 1989-90 when the retention rate for transfer students dipped for that year to 76.6% before returning to the 80s. Had we not been putting programs in place we might have experienced a continued decline in the retention rate as happened with the Freshmen. (See below for figures on retention rate, 1988-1992, and for comparisons between Freshmen and Transfer Rates).

Fall 1987-Spring 1988

	Freshmen		Transfer	
Still enrolled	876	84.0	551	81.1
Withdrawn/Inactive	70	6.7	56	8.2
Academic Dismissals	85	8.1	57	8.4
Non-Return	12	1.2	12	1.8
Idle	0	0.0	0	0.0
Graduated	0	0.0	3	0.4
TOTAL	1043	100.0	679	100.0

Fall 1988-Spring 1989

	Freshmen		Transfer	
Still enrolled	877	84.0	549	81.7
Withdrawn/Inactive	70	6.7	49	7.3
Academic Dismissals	83	8.0	46	6.8
Non-Return	14	1.3	26	3.9
Idle	0	0.0	0	0.0
Graduated	0	0.0	2	0.3
TOTAL	1044	100.0	672	100.0

Fall 1989-Spring 1990

	Freshmen		Transfer	
Still enrolled	723	78.9	493	76.6
Withdrawn/Inactive	39	4.3	45	7.0
Academic Dismissals	152	16.6	90	14.0
Non-Return	2	0.2	15	2.3
Idle	0	0.0	0	0.0
Graduated	0	0.0	1	0.2
TOTAL	916	100.0	644	100.0

Fall 1990-Spring 1991

	Freshmen		Transfer	
Still enrolled	755	82.1	586	80.1
Withdrawn/Inactive	40	4.3	50	6.8
Academic Dismissals	124	13.5	78	10.7
Non-Return	1	0.1	14	1.9
Idle	0	0.0	1	0.1
Graduated	0	0.0	3	0.4
TOTAL	920	100.0	732	100.0

Fall 1991-Spring 1992

	Freshmen		Transfer	
Still enrolled	711	83.4	598	86.4
Withdrawn/Inactive	32	3.8	16	2.3
Academic Dismissals	104	12.2	64	9.2
Non-Return	6	0.7	12	1.7
Idle	0	0.0	1	0.1
Graduated	0	0.0	1	0.1
TOTAL	853	100.0	692	100.0

* These figures are based on transfers who start in a Fall semester.

As a result of the Project a variety of models for retention were produced. They are available from SUNY Plattsburgh and include: 1. A video, "Moving Out, Moving On," for students about how best to prepare for transfer; 2. Transfer Guides to help students who wish to transfer to Plattsburgh plan their academic programs at their two-year schools by, among other things, matching the courses of two-year school with those of Plattsburgh; 3. A questionnaire for a survey of faculty attitudes towards transfer students; 4. A syllabus for a Transfer seminar at a two-year school; 5. Syllabi for Library Skills courses at a four-year school which are specifically designed for transfer students; 6. A newsletter series for students transferring to Plattsburgh; 7. A constitution for a Transfer Club; 8. A program for an automated credit evaluation that is linked with the graduation check for the four-year school; 9. Transfer Directories which give the name, major, and previous school of the Transfer Student. These are given to new Transfer students and to Transfer Counsellors at the two-year school; 10. A program for developing a statistical analysis for determining high-risk courses for first semester transfer students; 11. An example of a transfer student mentor network; 12. A report of a writing diagnostic project done in collaboration with faculty at receiving and sending colleges; 13. Guidelines for a student-to-student mentor network for students in education; 14. A script and planning document for Orientation seminars for transfer students; 15. A report on Media Programs at SUNY two-year institutions; and 16. The final report of the project, "The New Transfer Student Network: Retention and Quality Through Student-Faculty Interaction."

PURPOSE

The problem we tried to address was how to improve the retention rate of students who transfer from SUNY two-year colleges to SUNY four-year colleges. In 1987 when planning for the project began, almost 19,000 students transferred into or within SUNY. Almost 13,500 enrolled at baccalaureate campuses with about one-half of those originating at SUNY two-year colleges. Depending upon the four-year campus, the retention rate for these students ranged from percentages in the 50s to the low 80s. We decided to address the issue of improving retention from two directions: 1. Ascertain what data we had from the SUNY Central system and our own schools which could help us understand enrollment patterns for transfer students; and 2. Have faculty, staff, and students from two- and four-year schools work in collaboration to identify problems affecting successful transfer and develop solutions.

During the tenure of the project we were successful in both of our approaches. Thanks to improvement in data collection, analysis, and distribution, we now have a much better understanding of transfer students throughout the SUNY system, and we are better able to monitor their progress. We worked with the Assistant Provost for Institutional Research at SUNY Central to improve the collection of data from two- and four-year campuses and to develop reporting and distribution systems specifically addressing some of the concerns about data which representatives of the Transfer Advisory Network had expressed. We now have a very useful system of aggregate and individualized data widely distributed. This SUNY TRANSFER FEEDBACK SYSTEM continues to be modified in response to continued study of system-wide enrollment management. On the Plattsburgh campus we revised the survey given to incoming transfer students to include more questions related to retention issues, and the project director now directly monitors the retention of transfer students by attending the academic progress meetings and has begun to document the retention rate of transfer students who enter in January.

To address the second point--problems and improvements needed-- we tried to dispel some negative perceptions of transfer students held by some very vocal faculty members and to highlight the accomplishments of transfer students. We

also made several academic initiatives. Transfer students whose G.P.A. fell below 2.0 and were dismissed and reinstated on appeal were required to attend Learning-To-Learn workshops and to have tutoring when necessary. Also, the credit evaluation process was automated so that students would have a clearer idea of their academic programs and the requirements necessary to complete their degrees. Library skills (a course required for graduation) was redesigned to offer transfer students a specific skills course in their major rather than the generic one for Freshmen. We also studied the enrollment patterns of first semester transfer students who were dismissed in order to identify potentially high risk courses (for instance, those for which the student did not have adequate writing or math skills) and high risk configurations of courses (for instance, three advanced level courses in the major, including an advanced writing course).

Another issue addressed at the four-year school (SUNY Plattsburgh) was the need for change in the social climate. At the first Transfer Summer Institute several transfer students talked about their experiences during their first semester at Plattsburgh. It became clear that they had encountered problems of social adjustment, and that quality of their total college experience was a key component of retention. From that information we instituted a variety of initiatives at Plattsburgh: transfer directories which list the names, addresses, majors and transfer schools of all students who transferred in the Fall or Spring semester help students who transferred in January know who entered in the Fall from their from their previous schools, and it allows transfer counsellors the means of connecting potential transfer students with an alumnus of their school; a transfer club gives transfer students a chance to play a public leadership role almost as soon as they arrive on campus; an orientation session for the approximately 150 transfer students who enter in January, an expanded orientation program for the approximately 550 transfer students who enter for the Fall semester, and a series of Transfer Newsletters address such points as advisement, study abroad, internships and course selection; a video helps transfer students anticipate some of the social problems they can anticipate and provides very practical information about the transfer process; and a student mentor network whereby students in the Education School host a new transfer student who plans to major in Education and serve as a resource person for the student from the time the student pays a deposit through the first semester. (Unofficially, mentoring often continues beyond the first semester.) Staff and faculty from the two-year schools also addressed the issue of social adjustment by establishing transfer seminars or transfer clubs to help students prepare for the transition to a four-year school, and they work with our Transfer Center and Admissions Office to arrange for visits to our campus by students from local two-year schools. The Transfer seminar developed at Hudson Valley Community College was regarded as so successful by administrators at that school that is now a credit-bearing course with many sections.

In the process of making improvements at the two- and four-year schools, we fostered collaboration between faculty and staff at those schools. This was done in a variety of ways. To help students be as prepared as possible for four-year academic work, the Associate Director of Admissions prepared Transfer Guides for the six main two-year schools sending Transfer students to Plattsburgh. As part of the development of these Guides, faculty from two- and four-year schools in select disciplines met to review their courses to determine that the courses were truly equivalent. In order to continue dialogue between two- and four-year college faculty, the New York State organization of two-year transfer counsellors, founded in 1986, decided to change its structure to include staff from four-year colleges. It is anticipated that this larger, more inclusive structure will provide a vehicle for continuing discussion of such issues as retention.

From the inception of the project, our understanding has changed in three major ways. At the outset, we assumed that retention was solely a general academic issue--students needed to come to a four-year school with better academic preparation and the four-year school needed to provide more academic support services for transfer students. We also assumed that the issue of transfer retention could be addressed primarily on a state level. Both the academic issue and the SUNY-wide focus are valid, but they are more complex and broader than originally envisioned.

The general academic issue is valid, but to be meaningful, greater specificity by discipline is necessary. For instance, our Transfer Survey and other data collection have helped us to identify specific potential problem areas. We now know that students from certain schools in certain subjects are more vulnerable than others, and that certain of our courses are high risk the first semester. We therefore need to increase our dialogue with faculty and staff from those schools and with our own faculty and staff. We are also aware that transfer students often don't take math courses at their two-year schools. As a result, many come to the four-year school needing a refresher course on their high-school math or tutoring in math-based four-year courses. Having recently identified this potential problem, we alert students to it in our Orientation, and our Tutoring Center is prepared to address this problem. We need, however, to develop a diagnostic test so that a student will know as soon as possible that he or she needs a math review courses. We are also exploring adopting a model just developed for Freshmen. Those Freshmen who are identified in the first week of selected math-based class (e.g. Chemistry 101) will be placed in a specific non-credit course to be taken in conjunction with the selected math-based class. We also need to develop tutoring courses specifically designed for transfer students who may need help with the writing advanced course in the major.

We also learned that academic issues are not the only ones affecting retention. Social issues play a much larger role in the retention of transfer students than we had anticipated. (It is virtually a topic ignored in the literature about retention of Transfer students.) Once we identified social adjustment and total academic experience as issues we instituted (and maintain) the varied approaches mentioned in project results. we also became aware of the need for regional initiatives as well as SUNY-wide ones.

SUNY-wide initiatives, such as central data collection and an expanded Transfer Counsellor organization, are important, but we also need regional groupings of two- and four-year schools. On the regional basis, links between the major five or six sending schools and the main receiving four-year school make sense because of the possibilities for addressing specific issues of retention and the ease of promoting continuing dialogue between faculty and staff at all the schools.

For anyone trying to replicate our efforts--models to improve the retention of transfer students by greater collaboration between two- and four-year schools and SUNY Central administration--some administrative pitfalls to be avoided are starting the project with too small a group, not clearly defining the duties of those responsible for the project, and having no contingency plan if changes have to be made. At the four-year school we had a group of about 30 faculty and staff from all areas of the campus actively advising us on ways to improve things for transfer students. Our networks at some of the two-year schools were not as extensive, although we do have a core of faculty and staff. Both were adequate, but we could have done better if one of the co-directors of the project had been free to travel to each of the campuses periodically to recharge and expand the networks. We needed to do more site visits in order to get better response rate from the faculty at the two-year school. Also, when co-director Lafleur had to withdraw from the project at the end of the first year, the burden on the other co-director increased substantially. That situation was eventually corrected in the last year of the grant when the then Director of Enrollment Management at Plattsburgh assumed some of the external responsibilities for building links with other schools and with SUNY Central. She played a critical role in expanding our links with SUNY Central by bringing in the Associate Vice Chancellor for Access Services. He proved to be especially helpful when our official liaison, the Deputy to the Chancellor for Community Colleges, left SUNY in 1991. In fact, he hired our Director of Enrollment Management, who was retrenched effective 1991, to become his Associate for Transfer Articulation Review, and she has been working on ways to develop further the networks started in our model, and to initiate other similar networks across the university.

The administrative status of the project at Plattsburgh remains to be determined. The Associate Vice-President for Academic Affairs, one of the original co-directors of the project and the person in charge of articulation, died in June 1993. It appears that her position won't be filled for at least two years, if at all. The remaining co-director has taken another administrative position outside the SUNY system and will be leaving in August 1993. The full-time administrative coordinator funded by F.I.P.S.E. during the tenure of the grant was not replaced at the end of the funding cycle. It would have been good to have been able to maintain someone at that level at least on a part-time basis. Much of the clerical and other maintenance work is now done on an ad hoc basis by secretaries in various offices and by the co-director who was also the Associate Dean of Arts and Science and teaching one course every semester. It was therefore difficult for her to be able to leave campus to visit the two-year schools. Besides, her $2,235 budget was very limited for much travel. Although many of the tasks have been graciously taken on by staff in various offices on campuses, the need for general oversight, follow-up, and setting new initiatives on transfer issues remains crucial to maintaining the improved retention rate. It will be important to get a commitment from the person who will be hired as the new President in Fall 1993 to address this critical personnel issue. (The previous President resigned effective July, 1993). In effect, our retention rate for students has increased while that for administrators involved with transfer issues has plummeted!

BACKGROUND AND ORIGINS

SUNY Plattsburgh was particularly well-suited for the Transfer Project because it has long been a major receiver of transfer students (about 700 per year enter as transfers and about 50% of the graduates each year started as transfer students) and because two years before receiving the grant one of its top administrators had sponsored a statewide conference on transfer and articulation. It also had a fairly good record of retention of transfer students with a rate which increased from Fall 1984 to Fall 1987. Also, responsibility for transfer issues was held by a high-level administrator, the Associate Vice-President for Academic Affairs. In 1986, she had been a primary sponsor of the statewide conference on transfer and articulation issues which was funded, in part, by the Ford Foundation. The person who would be co-director of the Transfer Project was the Associate Dean of Arts and Science and had considerable experience with federally funded action grants. Furthermore, in 1986, transfer counselors from two-year SUNY colleges decided to form an organization to identify problems and solutions in the transfer process, and some administrators at SUNY Central began to make transfer

issues a priority. In 1987, the SUNY Board of Trustees tried to improve access for students transferring to four-year SUNY schools by adopting a policy that all SUNY two-year graduates would be given full transfer credit for general education courses completed at the two-year school and that they not be required to repeat successfully completed courses with similar curricular content. In 1988, the new Chancellor of SUNY publicly stressed his commitment to addressing transfer issues, and in 1989, SUNY instituted a system of guaranteed admission for A.A. and A.S. graduates to SUNY senior colleges in the student's region. The Project thus had good organizational support and momentum, both internally at the two- and four-year schools and externally at SUNY Central.

A significant change affecting our smooth running of the project was a downsizing and change in personnel in Institutional Research and the conversion to a new computing environment. For two years the retention of transfer students was not tracked, and it took the co-director a while to recapture the data. On the positive size, a new person assigned to Institutional Research worked with us to re-design the Transfer Student Survey, thereby providing us with some very helpful data. Also, the monitoring of retention rates is getting back on track. The other major change was the withdrawal of a co-director, the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, from the active running of the Project. She was then able to devote more time to articulation agreements, but an additional burden fell upon the remaining co-director.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The main players in the planning strategies were the representatives from the two-year schools, SUNY Central and SUNY Plattsburgh who comprised the Transfer Advisory Board. This Board met three times during each academic year and once each year at an annual three-day Transfer Summer Institute. Each representative was encouraged to form a Transfer Network of faculty and staff interested in transfer issues at his or her campus. Our planning focused on our key assumptions that the identification of problems affecting retention of transfer students and the development of solutions rested on getting as much data as we could about the enrollment histories of transfer students, and on engaging in extensive and continuing dialogue with faculty, staff, and students at the network schools and with representatives from SUNY Central. Without that approach each institution would made changes in a vacuum, if it made any. Also, without the support or recommendation of the whole Network, some proposed solutions would be difficult to implement or implemented at a much slower pace.

Our planning also kept in mind that concern for transfer issues would need to be continued at all levels--SUNY Central, SUNY Plattsburgh, and the two-year schools--long after funding from F.I.P.S.E. ceased. Therefore, we tried to expand the Network to ensure that faculty and staff at all the participating institutions, as well as at other schools, would continue to pay attention to transfer issues. We also tried to create models that might easily be applied at other institutions or at least easily modified to meet the needs of a particular school.

The Plattsburgh network identified and addressed several issues on the four-year campus: some faculty's negative perception of transfer students; inadequate academic preparation by some transfers; inadequate orientation for transfer students; inadequate social support structures for transfer students, and the need for an automated credit evaluation system and course equivalency guides and for academic recognition for transfer students. The SUNY/CUNY network identified and addressed several issues on their own campuses and on the SUNY central administration level. These include: 1. the need for more comprehensive data from SUNY Central about how their transfer students achieve at the four-year SUNY schools; 2. the need for opportunities for two- and four-year college faculty and staff to meet to discuss issues of common concern; 3. additional ways to prepare students for transfer, especially the need for course and program equivalency guides.

Because it involved so many schools and central administration and because it had so many different components, the Project required a great deal of co-ordination. Fortunately, the grant provided funding to hire one person full-time as the Project coordinator. The grant also paid for a part-time secretary which was critical to helping the coordinator. Add to that the fact that one of the co-directors was released one course to work on the Project and that people were hired to do discrete tasks on the Project, and you have a sense of the labor intensive nature of the Project. Organizing the annual Summer Institutes was enormously time-consuming, labor intensive, and a significant budget item in the grant. Yet, it was well worth it, as evinced by the excellent projects resulting from the Institutes and from the fact that the Institutes provided a model for faculty and staff discussions that may be recommended by SUNY Central for use throughout the system.

PROJECT RESULTS

During the three and one-half years of the Project, almost all of the issues raised about the transfer process were addressed. Our learners were faculty, staff, and students, and each product we produced, each Institute conducted, each

student-related activity was evaluated. No report about any of the activities has been negative, but we did receive some very helpful suggestions. For instance, our evaluation of the first Summer Institute convinced us to shorten the time to 2 and 1/2 days rather than 3 and 1/2. Feedback from students and faculty about the Transfer Orientation seminars convinced us to group the students by major rather than randomly. The latest survey of the students who have attended the first three of four possible Orientation sessions in the summer were very satisfied with them.

TRANSFER SEMINARS, 1993

Please help us evaluate these seminars by responding to the following questions:

		NO	SOMEWHAT		YES
1.	The seminar increased your awareness of advisement issues.	1 *4*	2 *25*	3 *56*	4 *223*
2.	The seminar increased your understanding of the course selection process.	1 *6*	2 *30*	3 *112*	4 *191*
3.	The Seminar increased your understanding of the role of General Education courses in your intellectual development.	1 *15*	2 *45*	3 *36*	4 *140*
4.	The seminar helped you to understand how to calculate your G.P.A.	1 *35*	2 *36*	3 *95*	4 *174*
5.	The seminar leader(s) acquainted you with some of the academic and social risks you might encounter.	1 7	2 *20*	3 70	4 *241*
6.	The seminar leader(s) acquainted you with some of the problems you might encounter during the first week and suggested ways to address them.	1 *8*	2 13	3 *84*	4 *231*
7.	The seminar leader(s) acquainted you with the possibilities for academic success.	1 *4*	2 *16*	3 *79*	4 *238*
8.	The seminar leader(s) acquainted you with the opportunities for leadership on campus.	1 *20*	2 *42*	3 *98*	4 *178*
9.	The seminar leader(s) acquainted you with the opportunities for academic enrichment on campus.	1 *7*	2 *26*	3 *99*	4 *214*
10.	The seminar leader(s) gave general hints about "survival" skills.	1 *4*	2 *37*	3 *111*	4 *187*
11.	The seminar leader(s) answered questions about your major.	1 *13*	2 *26*	3 *71*	4 *210*
12.	You had an opportunity to raise questions and concerns.	1 *6*	2 *16*	3 *53*	4 *265*
13.	Overall, the seminars were helpful.	1 *2*	2 *15*	3 *59*	4 *261*
14.	Please feel free to suggest additional topics to be covered in the seminar.				

*Responses in italic type.

The overall result of all of our specific efforts is a more informed transfer student--one who knows to ask questions and is confident that s/he can persist. We also have a staff and faculty at Plattsburgh, and to a lesser extent at the participating schools, who are much more aware of how they can help with transfer retention issues. This awareness is evident in the various activities undertaken to help transfer students. The result of all of this can be seen in improved retention rate.

A survey of faculty revealed that the faculty who perceived transfer students very negatively were a small minority. The survey also revealed a very positive attitude about transfer students among many faculty. This information was widely publicized which helped to challenge the views of those who held very negative views. Awarding of 8-10 Presidential Transfer Scholarships (comparable to those awarded to outstanding entering Freshmen) and extensive publicity about the recipients helped remind faculty and staff about the academic strengths of some transfer students. A study by the Accounting faculty of how students who had entered as Freshmen in Accounting and were now juniors compared with Transfer students in upper level accounting courses indicated no significant difference in the students' academic success. Prior to the project there was no orientation for the approximately 150 transfer students who enrolled for the first time for Spring semester, and there was little academic content in the orientation sessions held for the approximately 600 transfer students entering for Fall semester. Now, orientation is held for students entering in Spring semester as well as for the students entering for Fall semester and both have a solid academic component. Specially trained faculty from disciplines which draw a number of transfer students conduct academic orientation sessions. They are sometimes assisted by former transfer students who are members of the recently established Transfer Club.

Retaining students by addressing issues of inadequate academic preparation and quality of their total college experience were addressed in a variety of ways. A comprehensive study of the transfer students who were academically dismissed indicated that in some cases the problem was less one of academic ability and more one of transfer students being placed in or selecting high risk courses or schedules the first semester. This problem was addressed by bringing it to the attention of faculty who pre-register students into courses and by advising students during Orientation on how best to prepare a schedule. To help students be as prepared as possible for four-year academic work, the Associate Director of Admissions prepared Transfer Guides for the six main two-year schools sending Transfer students to Plattsburgh. These guides specify what courses the student should take at the two-year school in order to transfer into a specific major at Plattsburgh, and they include tables of courses from the two-year institution which indicate whether a course will transfer for credit and, if so, whether it will count towards a student's major or general education requirements. He also completed a credit evaluation system. As a effort to help students be well-prepared for entrance to Plattsburgh, the Admissions staff provides credit evaluations for all students who apply. This can now be done in a more timely fashion because of automation. Also, since the credit evaluation is linked with a graduation audit check, the transfer student and his/her advisor will have an excellent academic map for the years the students is at Plattsburgh. To give transfer students a sense of the work at Plattsburgh, the Project Director and Admissions Office host visits by students from local two-year schools. This gives students an opportunity to attend classes and to interact with Plattsburgh students. Some students are also able to have their writing skills evaluated before they come to Plattsburgh by having a member of the Transfer Network send the student's writing sample to one of Plattsburgh's writing faculty who evaluates it in comparison with other Plattsburgh students. To help students who may have come with inadequate academic background, the Project Director worked with faculty to encourage them to provide referrals to the staff of the Learning Center who are alert to needs of transfer students. If a transfer student fails out, but successfully applies for reinstatement, a condition of reinstatement is that the student agree to attend a series of Learning-To-Learn workshops designed based on assessment of the needs of academically at risk transfer students.

The issue of social support systems has been addressed in four ways: establishment of a club specifically for transfer students; annual publication of transfer student directories which list the names, addresses, majors and transfer schools of all new transfers on campus; a series of five newsletters addressing such points as advisement, study abroad, internships and course selection; and a student-to-student mentor network for education majors.

The SUNY and CUNY Transfer Network addressed its three main issues: data, maintaining the network, and additional ways to prepare students for transfer from a variety of perspectives. Since the Project coincided with a goal of SUNY Central administration for more information about transfer students and a guaranteed access initiative, the network was able to work closely with the Assistant Provost for Institutional Research and the Associate Vice Chancellor in the Office of Access Services. The former was gracious enough to conduct a data needs and possibilities session at each of the three Transfer Summer Institutes; the latter also participated in the Institutes and has been instrumental in finding resources to continue aspects of the Project at the SUNY Central level. One of the outcomes of those sessions is an annual report which details the persistence of transfer students from a SUNY community college to a SUNY senior institution as part of the SUNY TRANSFER FEEDBACK SYSTEM.

Maintaining the network and developing additional ways to prepare students for transfer are linked. Beginning in November 1992, SUNY Central began to implement the Network's recommendation that SUNY Central help maintain some of the Project's activities by investigating the possibility of organizing regional networks of two and four-year schools. The former director of Enrollment Management at Plattsburgh, who was closely associated with the Transfer Project, has been appointed by SUNY Central to research the possibility of having regional groups. At Plattsburgh many of the activities of the Project were coordinated by the former Project Co-Director who has been given a modest budget and office space for transfer activities. Two of her pending projects are the production of a article about the various initiatives and collaborative efforts undertaken during the funding period, and to ensure that the activities continue after she leaves for another position.

We continue to evaluate each of our activities, to modify existing ones, to develop new ones and to monitor the retention rate. Some activities we evaluate each time we do them (e.g. the Orientation seminars). Others we do on a three-year basis (e.g. the Transfer Directories). Others we do as needed (For example, this Spring a review was begun to determine if transfer students are entering with sufficient math and writing skills for upper level courses).

SUMMARY and CONCLUSIONS

The goals of the grant have been met beyond our expectations in at least two ways: 1. the retention rate is has gone from 81.1% to 86.4% and is hold holding steady in the mid-80s. We had hoped for a 3% increase. A 5.3% increase is remarkable, especially since during the years of the grant a new, very rigorous academic dismissal policy was introduced and the retention rate dipped. Had programs not been being put into place it's conceivable that the rate would have dropped as much as it did for the Freshmen. 2. The continued commitment of SUNY Central to the goals of the program remains strong. Despite the severe budget cuts experienced by SUNY, the Central Administration eventually was able to fund a person to investigate the possibility of continuing the Project's logical outcome--the establishment of regional state transfer networks to adopt some of the Transfer Project's models or create their own models of retention.

The insights I gained at the four-year college level as a result of this activity were an understanding of the complexity and broadness of transfer issues, an awareness of how little attention had been paid to them, and an appreciation of what can be done with some effort. I also realized that researching transfer issues provides an opportunity to observe how well colleges and other institutions work--be it providing a definition of transfer, tracking retention rates, providing student services, or adopting policies for Admissions. I would argue that how well a school or central system pays attention to its transfer students (assuming that their numbers are significant) can and should be an important measure of the health of those entities.

As may be obvious from the above, my advice to others is to involve as many people at as many different levels as soon and as long as possible. Less obvious in my advice to others would be to work closely with their Institutional Research Office throughout the period of any grant. I did not learn until after our grant that the way of tracking retention rates had changed and that the Office could no longer give us data in the same way as prior to the grant. Thanks to the Registrar, formerly of the Institutional Research Office, the original system was reconstructed, but it took a considerable amount of her time. It is also very important to plan ahead who or what offices might assume some of the work done by the staff on F.I.P.S.E. money--in this case, the coordinator and half-time secretary. Also, if the Project is to be co-directed it would be good to establish a division of labor at the outset and contingency plans if a co-director has to withdraw.

APPENDICES

The F.I.P.S.E. staff and Program Officer were very pleasant and helpful. They introduced me to people working on similar projects and answered all my questions in a timely and useful way. They were genuinely enthusiastic about the Project. I suggest that they consider providing Project directors with recommendations on how they might publish the results of their projects, and that they continue to ask former project directors to evaluate potential grants in their field. The latter is a very helpful way of keeping you thinking about ways to re-evaluate what you are doing.

Key considerations for future Transfer Projects continue to be how to improve retention. Consequently, there needs to be even greater emphasis on continuing discussions between faculty and staff of two- and four-year schools in order to ensure adequate levels of preparation and reception. This will become increasingly challenging as more and more schools have to rely on adjunct faculty as budgets continue to be eroded. It will also be especially challenging to convince administrators and faculty at four-year schools that the same amount of attention and resources should be devoted to retention of transfer students as to Freshmen. As the retention issue becomes more refined, emphasis will shift from simply

retaining transfers (as well as Freshmen) to focussing on time needed for students to complete the baccalaureate. Also, emphasis will be placed on partnerships between high schools, two-year schools, and four-year colleges.

I am forwarding no materials generated by the Project because they have been sent continuously during the Project. Since my Program Officer, Jay Donahue, said that his file on this Project was one of the thickest, I'm sure he'd be willing to forward all materials to you. If not, please let me know and I'll ship off a box load.